

“Operation Gideon”: The Amphibious Assault against Venezuela.

U.S. Aggression Against Venezuela Isn't About Human Rights

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Global Research, July 31, 2020
[Peacedata](#) 28 July 2020

Region: [Latin America & Caribbean, USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Media Disinformation](#),
[Oil and Energy](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

On May, 3, U.S. mercenaries and the [American-backed](#) Venezuelan opposition launched a half-baked coup d'état attempt to overthrow President Nicolás Maduro and the ruling Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (PSUV). Dubbed [Operation Gideon](#), the “amphibious assault” was headed up by two U.S. former Special Forces members and 60 members of Venezuela’s opposition.

The plot was comically harebrained. The mercenaries were to storm the coastline just north of Caracas, defeat the Venezuelan military by inspiring an uprising, kidnap President Maduro, and transport him to the U.S. via a local airport. The “invasion” was set to begin with 300 men, yet the plan continued with only 62. The latest bungled attempt to upend the Bolivarian Revolution conjures up déjà vu of the failed Bay of Pigs invasion and comes as the Trump administration has plotted coup attempts, executed vicious acts of economic warfare, and is now offering a [\\$15 million bounty](#) of U.S. taxpayer money on Maduro.

The mercenaries were sponsored by a Trump-linked and Florida-based private security contractor, SilverCorps U.S.A. The plot — set up by longtime Trump bodyguard and security consultant, [Keith Schiller](#) — was originally hatched by Jordan Goudreau, an ex-Green Beret and head of SilverCorps, and the Venezuelan opposition led by Juan Guaidó. The Trump administration denied any involvement in the attempted coup, yet given the administration has ramped up displays of open hostilities towards Venezuela, this denial should be taken with a grain of salt.

Operation Gideon was unearthed by Venezuelan intelligence back in March, and before the two boats carrying the marauders could begin storming the beaches, they were intercepted by fishermen loyal to Maduro. Goudreau later acknowledged that the two captured former U.S. Special Forces members — [Airan Berry](#) and Luke Denman — were working with him. The ex-Green Beret previously [ran security](#) for Trump’s political events and at billionaire Richard Branson’s Live Aid event on the Venezuelan-Colombian border. [According to a close friend of Goudreau’s](#), the plot to oust Maduro was likely a desperate bid to secure the U.S. State Department’s \$15 million bounty.

After the maritime assault was foiled, a [document](#) obtained by the *Washington Post* showed that Operation Gideon was signed onto by Guaidó, with the goal of overthrowing Maduro, including an armed counter-insurgency. In an attempt to place a cushion between Guaidó and the would-be “invasion,” the agreement document’s validity was disputed by the Venezuelan opposition as a [forgery](#). After the claim by the Venezuelan opposition, the documents were mysteriously retracted and replaced.

Bizarrely enough, Goudreau has sought out media attention to confirm Guaidó's support for his failed raid [releasing audio](#) of the signing of the document and a general services agreement that he claims Guaidó was present for and signed. Goudreau is likely to remain in the headlines given that he is now [under investigation](#) by U.S. authorities. This most recent utterly baffling and seemingly implausible saga to topple a left-wing Latin American government by a dysfunctional cast of grifters amounts as a pandemic surges, having unprecedented impacts on health systems and economies.



While the U.S. is [leading the world](#) in COVID-19 cases and a skyrocketing death toll, murderous sanctions, and a [knee-capping embargo](#) are keeping medical necessities and aid away from the Venezuelan people. With the U.S. political and business class focusing instead on overthrowing and destabilizing governments rather than protecting working-class Americans from a pandemic and an economic meltdown, it's time for the American people to condemn savage U.S. imperialism in Latin America, economic warfare against Venezuela, and stand up to their ruling class.

“Assuring an Adequate Supply of Petroleum for the U.S.”

Operation Gideon was not an outlying incident, the debacle occurred in accordance with decades, if not centuries, of U.S. foreign policy precedent in Latin America. Along with [Bolivia's lithium](#) and other resource-rich Latin American nations, Venezuela's plentiful oil deposits — the [largest reserves](#) in the world — have long been on the wish list for business interests and the U.S.'s political and financial elite.

In 1948, the American-backed right-wing dictator, Marcos Pérez Jiménez overthrew the democratically-elected government of Rómulo Gallegos. The regime developed tight ties with the U.S. oil industry, allowing companies like Exxon and Mobil to profit from the ample supply. Pérez Jiménez achieved U.S.-support through [ruthless repression](#) of his opposition, defaming anyone who opposed his regime and using his power to torture, imprison, and “disappear” dissidents.

Two years later, in 1950, official [U.S. State Department objectives](#) in Venezuela were stated as, “All policies toward Venezuela are affected in greater or less degree by the objective of assuring an adequate supply of petroleum for the U.S.” Washington also recognized the large iron deposits and encouraged development to supplement U.S. reserves.

In the decades following the U.S.-backed Pérez Jiménez regime, Venezuelan leaders mostly held a bipartisan neoliberal consensus that was marked by a further oil boom in the '70s, a debt crisis in the '80s, to widespread corruption and the failure of liberal institutions in the

'90s. The economy fluctuated regularly — yet a fundamental constant throughout this period was the Venezuelan government's appeasement to the economic elite and U.S. business interests.

Three decades of allowing U.S. capital to profit from Venezuelan resources left little wealth contributed to the tax base, spurring millions into action, eager for change. In 1998, PSUV, led by Hugo Chávez created a movement that secured power through democratic elections. Initially, Chávez was met with little resistance as he obtained widespread popular support throughout the country. Yet, after promises to nationalize industry — including oil production — redistributing land to the poor, and reducing poverty with heavy investments in social programs, Chávez was quick to go on the defensive.

Delegitimizing and Toppling the Bolivarian Revolution

In 2002, the [U.S.-backed opposition](#) affirmed the policy of regime change when forces led by Pedro Carmona — a wealthy petrochemical tycoon — sought to oust Chávez in a [coup d'état](#). The coup ultimately failed and Chávez was restored to power only 48 hours after a massive uprising of PSUV supporters erupted, yet the attempted removal established U.S. precedent for regime change for years to come.

Just months after winning re-election, Hugo Chávez died at 58, leaving his mentee Nicolás Maduro as his successor. In 2013, new elections were called, in which PSUV and Maduro continued Chávez's legacy, winning the Presidency and defeating centrist candidate Henrique Capriles by less than two percent of the vote. In the aftermath, Capriles called the [election illegitimate](#) — although disproven by [international observers](#) — and demanded a recount. Venezuela's electoral officials conducted an audit in which Maduro came out on top, while Capriles [continuously rejected](#) the outcome. A year prior, during which Chávistas retained power, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter even [remarked](#), "As a matter of fact, of the 92 elections that we've monitored, I would say that the election process in Venezuela is the best in the world."

In the controversial 2018 election, Maduro was seeking to renew his bid from the Presidency, in what the Venezuelan opposition, the U.S., and popular media outlets have called a "show election" due to voter turnout plummeting to [46 percent](#) — only ten percent less than voter turnout in the 2016 U.S. election. In an effort to further delegitimize Venezuelan democracy, all major western countries and the Venezuelan opposition condemned the elections as fraudulent. The opposition party preemptively chose to boycott the elections to qualify [their false claim](#) of election fraud, knowing their party would likely lose to Maduro's PSUV.

Unlike the American electoral system, the Venezuelan electoral system includes [paper ballot backups](#) that make election fraud nearly impossible. Furthermore, over one hundred impartial international observers — who were present during the 2018 election — [condemned the West's](#) claim of fraudulent elections, stating, "[these are] fabrications of the most disgraceful kind, based on hearsay and not on evidence."

The U.S. and its allies responded with a barrage of sanctions that targeted Venezuela's top exports — including petroleum products, crude oil, and gold — which was accompanied by cutting off the pipeline of imported [food products](#). This resulted in further hobbling of the Venezuelan economy creating massive inflation as the government's failed [monetary policy](#) struggled to keep pace with an international economic onslaught.

In 2019, with the economy increasingly in shambles, the U.S. created further destabilization by sponsoring a sort of “soft coup.” The recognition of opposition leader Juan Guaidó — who has never won a democratic election for President — as the legitimate President of Venezuela resulted in the further destabilizing effects on the country. By August, the Trump administration announced an embargo that will undoubtedly create more misery for ordinary Venezuelans.

As 2020 rolls on, March, 30, was marked by the Maduro government [calling on](#) Guaidó to respond to questioning for allegedly sponsoring an attempted coup and assassination attempt. On April 1, Trump [ordered](#) navy ships and surveillance planes to the Venezuelan coast, in the largest U.S. military buildup in Latin America since the invasion of Panama in 1989.

As the pandemic broke out, Guaidó and fellow opposition lawmakers [approved a \\$5,000 monthly stimulus](#) for themselves under the guise of protecting health professionals during the COVID crisis, while Venezuelan doctors and nurses got a one-time payment of \$100. The latest scheme to destabilize and hopefully depose the Maduro government manifested in Operation Gideon and upon the [seizure of 31 tons gold](#) by the Bank of England from Venezuela’s holdings last May.

U.S. Economic Warfare Isn’t About Protecting Human Rights

As the COVID calamity rages on, U.S. economic warfare is [exacerbating death rates](#) and suffering. While ordinary Americans are struggling to make ends meet due to unprecedented pandemic, police and white supremacists violence — and now the testing of [Trump’s secret police in Portland](#) “disappearing” people off the streets — are ruthlessly being carried out against American citizens supporting the Black Lives Matter movement. The callousness of U.S. empire is being brought home, and Americans are getting a brief taste in the tactics, austerity, and disdain for human rights the U.S. has [historically promoted](#) in Latin America and Venezuela.

The U.S. had the stated intent of placing economic restrictions on the Bolivarian Republic to curtail alleged human rights violations, yet the sanctions and embargo placed on the Venezuelan economy have worked against that goal. Before the COVID crisis claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands, a report released by the Center For Economic and Policy Research found that U.S. sanctions from 2017 to 2018 have directly contributed to the deaths of [40,000 Venezuelans](#).

Pandemic aside, the report also states that the sanctions and recognition of a parallel, unelected government have intensified the humanitarian crisis. To turn a crisis into a catastrophe, Venezuelan and American business interests are also [withholding products](#) from the market resulting in [capital strikes](#), while Western banks and states seize Venezuelan assets.

Acts of economic warfare by the U.S. foreign policy apparatus and business class are meant to strangle economies therefore sowing discontent among the common people. In Venezuela’s case — by cutting off the global supply of goods and resources, essentially blockading exports, seizures of assets, and capital strikes — the U.S. has ensured the poorest are most exploited by the economic effects. Ultimately, economic warfare is a ploy to set the stage for U.S.-sponsored regime change, while heightening a humanitarian crisis that creates the conditions for a counterrevolution through the American-sponsored Juan

Guaidó.

Given the storied history of American meddling in overthrowing democratically-elected leftist governments in Latin America, mainstream attitudes regarding the crisis in Venezuela by U.S. politicians — housed by both [liberals and conservatives](#) — is disconcerting. While America's ruling class must shoulder the blame, it is the ordinary American working-class citizens who must take responsibility for their government's actions in depriving wealth and sovereignty to traditionally and continually exploited people, domestically and abroad.

U.S. acts of imperialism and economic warfare will not end until ordinary American citizens stand in solidarity with the people tortured by capital and the U.S. foreign policy apparatus. If the American people believe in human rights they must condemn their government and corporations' brutal and tedious need for economic domination and call for a more equitable distribution of resources to the world's working-class people, ceasing murderous acts of economic warfare, and recognizing the will of the people in sovereign nations.

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